



Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

Neilsen, Philip M. (2013) '*In the Room*' and '*School Chemistry Class*'. [Textual Work]

This file was downloaded from: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/67143/>

© Copyright 2013 Philip Neilsen

No reproduction of this creative work without consent of the author.

Notice: *Changes introduced as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing and formatting may not be reflected in this document. For a definitive version of this work, please refer to the published source:*

Issue 4 [Ambiguity](#) In the House; and School Chemistry Class

Philip Neilsen

In the House

As my mother drifts into dementia,
she retells the stories:
driving from Townsville to Brisbane
in 1936, a revolver under the seat.
The world war, the yanks dancing on Wickham Terrace, courtship.

She reels us into her vivid days.
The buttons on an RAAF uniform in 1945,
red geraniums that ran along the porch.

Then forgets she has already offered
us a drink five times. She laughs.
As this speck of a galaxy
slides into tyrannical dark
and all the planets dance like fleas,
what plausible warmth can come
from talk and scones and tea?

School Chemistry Class

Phosphorus was my friend
sulphur my satanic journey

oh how I loved the way
you burned magnesium

explained the periodic table
of getting laid by numbers

come with me, you said,
the equations always balance

then some collection of molecules,
better connected, came to town.

Your mother still liked me though,
said there are plenty of atoms in the sea

but I knew only one had your odour, colour,
unique properties under conditions of heat.

About the author

Philip Neilsen is a Brisbane poet and fiction writer. He is professor of creative writing at QUT. His most recent books are *Without an alibi* (2008) and *The Cambridge companion to creative writing*, co-edited with David Morley (2012). He is currently editing a book on creative arts therapy for those with severe mental illness.

- [Privacy policy](#)
- [Copyright](#)

Supported by [the Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra](#)